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SUBJECT: ALGERIAN MEDIA REACTION TO PRESIDENT'S CAIRO SPEECH

The right words, but what follows?

There is a consensus among the Algerian press that President Obama has been saying the right things, but the press remains skeptical about the speech; they are still waiting for the "right" acts. The French-language press coverage was predominantly positive, hailing President Obama's message as a message that Arabs and Muslims are not used to hearing from U.S. presidents. The French-language press also considered the speech a turning point in U.S.-Muslim world relations and the founding document of the U.S. reconciliation with the Arab/Muslim world. The Arabic-language press, on the other hand, was more pessimistic in its assessment, believing that President Obama's speech will not lead to a real change for the Arab/Muslim world, but rather it is up to Arabs and Muslims to bring about change themselves.

Selected Headlines

"Obama extends his hand to the Muslim world: 'Salam Alaikoum!'" and "The U.S. President delivers a historic speech in Cairo: Dr. Hussein and Mr. Obama." Liberal-democratic French-language newspaper Liberte

"The U.S.-Muslim world, a new chapter is begun: 'Islam is not part of the problem...Elections alone do not make a true democracy.'" And "Palestinian-Israeli conflict: Support that awaits acts." Largest circulation French-language newspaper El Watan

"The great seduction operation." Influential French-language newspaper Le Quotidien d'Oran

"Obama preaches his peace." Medium circulation French-language newspaper Le Jeune Independant

"Obama extends his hand to the Muslim world and Iraq." Influential French-language newspaper L'Expression

"The turning point?" State-run French-language newspaper El Moudjahid

"A 'charming' speech, until change: Obama calls upon the Muslims to turn the page on conflicts and confirms the U.S.'s solid relationship with Israel." And "Controversial reactions to Obama's speech: Welcoming of the new tone and warning about a policy of speeches." Arabic-language newspaper of the governing party (National Liberation Front), Sawt Al Ahrar

"Obama's speech drowns in ideals and calls for recognizing Israel: He tried to touch the Muslims' hearts by using Koran verses." Islamist and largest circulation Arabic-language newspaper Echourouk El Youmi

"Conservatives criticize Obama's speech saying that it made the U.S. appear as a weak country." Medium circulation, Islamist Arabic-language newspaper El Bilad

"Obama...Wa Alaikoum Assalam (Peace be upon you, too)." Medium

circulation Arabic-language newspaper El Djazair News

"Obama's speech: Political or military choices?" State-run Arabic-language newspaper Echaab

Block Quotes

"A path full of traps," commentary by Tayeb Belghiche in El Watan

"In his speech...President Barack Obama reached out to the Muslim world, a world particularly traumatized by the policy of his predecessor, George W. Bush. More importantly, he stressed the need to assist the Palestinian people to live free and independent in their own state. We felt, in his speech, sincerity and unfailing determination. None of his predecessors had addressed this issue at the beginning of his term. They were all afraid of pressures from the U.S. Zionist lobby that had the power to stand in the way of a second term. Obama has come with a direct style and...gives the impression that he will see it through."

"First step," editorial by Abrous Outoudert in Liberte

"Barack Obama revealed himself as an expert communicator and a powerful orator to face an audience composed of various leanings, primarily curious to listen, but soon captivated by the message. On Muslim soil, the U.S. President did not rush to give lessons. He was content to express his sentiments and discuss the approach that the U.S. is now committed to in the Muslim world: confrontation should be abandoned to make way for the dialogue of civilizations, with mutual respect as the first premise. Islam is part of American society, religious and puritan, and it is a religion of peace and tolerance that some extremists have led astray...One thing is for sure, Barack Obama achieved a political acrobatic feat and proved to be a public relations strategist. Having delivered his letter addressed to the Arab-Muslim world, he awaits the response."

"History changer or illusionist?" analysis by Kharroubi Habib in Le Quotidien d'Oran

"In Cairo, Barack Obama gave a speech...that will go down in history. For the reason that this speech will be considered, in the future, as the founding document of America's reconciliation with that part of humanity with which its relations had hitherto been tinged with sectarian prejudices and often violently conflicting...For the time being, the outstanding speaker who is Barack Obama managed to capture the interest and sympathy of Muslims he addressed in a "style" and words they were not used to hearing from former Presidents of the greatest world power. They were receptive to the apparent empathy he expressed towards their religion, problems and aspirations."

"Better than Susan Boyle," editorial by Mohamed Khodja in Le Jeune Independant

From now on, Barack Obama is presenting himself as the nightingale of politics. In front of a camera, the man is gifted with a voice as charming as Susan Boyle's. Obama addressed convinced Muslims. They applauded the Quran verses...but no one judged it decent to applaud when Obama shook up the Palestinian resistance that overcame the genocide committed by Israel using U.S. weapons...Obama tells us once more that we must not touch Israel...The lyrics are the same, only the music has changed."

"Wake up....Obama is not the new Messiah!" commentary by Moustafa Ferhat in Echourouk El Youmi

"Obama will not be the man of change in the Muslim world...Muslims need to develop their political, economic and cultural conditions by constructing governments based on institutions not on individuals, by implementing transparency, and respecting the people instead of oppressing them. This is the right way for change."

"Thank You Obama," editorial by Nadjib Belhimer in Sawt Al Ahrar

"The Arabs should understand that even the best American administration cannot do better than what was accomplished by its predecessors, which means that the Arabs should change their state

of affairs themselves."

"We listened and left," editorial by Khadir Bougaila in El Khabar, a large circulation Arabic-language newspaper

"Obama has said what he had to say, and we need to do what we have to do. The U.S. was unfair with us and caused us a lot of suffering, but we have to recognize that it did not force us to fight against each other, and it did not encourage the Muslim and Arab leaders to oppress their people."

"An explanation of Obama's speech to the Arab world," analysis by Mahmoud Abu Bakr in El Djazair News

"Obama's speech to the Arab world constitutes a significant first step in the right direction. The bad historical background of the past U.S. administration should not constitute an obstacle to any positive step proposed or made by the new administration, which has demonstrated in a short period that it is working seriously towards making a significant change in its foreign policy. It is our duty (as Arabs) to translate these words into actions."

DAUGHTON